

Dizzy on caffeine

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/27849330) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/27849330>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Video Blogging RPF , Dream Team RPF
Relationship:	Clay Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)
Character:	Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , Darryl Noveschosch
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe , Alternate Universe - College/University , Alternate Universe - Coffee Shops & Cafés , Mutual Pining , Happy Ending
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Dizzy on caffeine / All your freedom, caffeine, how you're looking at me
Stats:	Published: 2020-12-03 Completed: 2021-01-06 Chapters: 9/9 Words: 9982

Dizzy on caffeine

by [GleamingGreenGoggles](#)

Summary

“What’s your name?” George looks up, and the guy is raising an eyebrow at him. “For the cup!” he does not squeak in reply, holding up the cup and giving it a slight wave, deciding that he’s got no dignity left for the week, let alone the rest of this torturous conversation.

“Clay,” the guy says, eyebrow coming down.

“Anything else?” George asks, beating down the temptation to try the name out out loud. Clay. It strangely doesn’t suit him.

It's a DreamNotFound coffeeshop AU, what more do you need to know...

Notes

Unbetaed, all mistakes are my own. Please let me know if there are any glaring errors!

Chapter 1

George isn't concentrating.

He *should* be concentrating - it's the middle of the Monday morning post-early-lectures rush, with a line stretching out the door, and if there's one thing he's learnt from working here, it's that getting between caffeine deprived students and their coffee hit is a *bad* idea.

The problem is, there's a guy in the line. Not just any guy - someone George hasn't seen in here before, but who (unfortunately) happens to be *Hot*. Capital H hot.

He'd only noticed him because he was tall, a good few inches taller than everyone else in the line. But then he'd *looked*, and oh boy. He was blonde to go with the tall, with messy, longish hair, and looking sports-team fit even in a baggy hoodie.

George isn't usually this thirsty over people he's never even spoken to, but his brain had short circuited and he'd tripped over whatever he was trying to say to the customer he was *meant* to be serving at his register, completely forgetting everything she'd just said and making himself look like a moron, just because he'd caught sight of the guy.

And now he's getting closer to the front of the line, and it's taking an extraordinary amount of willpower for George to drag his eyes away and try to concentrate on the customers in front of him.

That doesn't stop him from sneaking every glance he can get though, and it just gets *worse*. He has freckles scattered across his stupidly attractive face, and he's got this pensive sort of expression that makes him look intelligent as well as hot, the type of expression people who are really good at faking how much attention they're paying in lectures wear, except on him it actually looks genuine somehow.

Which is fine (mostly), until the guy is at the front of the line, and clears his throat, because George has been concentrating so hard on splitting his attention between the hot guy and his actual customers that said hot guy is now standing at his register and George is still just staring.

Fuck.

George looks up, and blinks dumbly, and *oh no*, because the guy has *gorgeous* eyes.

He is totally screwed.

"What do you want?" and oh shit oh fuck that was not what he's meant to say.

Hot guy *grins*, and holy shit that's just not fair.

"I mean, a coffee, if it's not too much trouble," he says, and that's it, that's George's brain checking out for the day, because he's got a voice to match the rest of him. George makes an entirely involuntary, high-pitched, panicked-sounding giggle, and the guy seems to take pity on him, which is probably worse somehow.

"Large double shot latte. Please."

"What's your name?" George looks up, and the guy is raising an eyebrow at him. "For the cup!" he *does not squeak* in reply, holding up the cup and giving it a slight wave, deciding that he's got no dignity left for the week, let alone the rest of this torturous conversation.

“Clay,” the guy says, eyebrow coming down. George scrawls something on the cup that could be ‘Day’ with a backwards D, but looks more like an unpronounceable mash of vowels after a C.

“Anything else?” George asks, beating down the temptation to try the name out loud. Clay. It strangely doesn’t suit him.

“No, thanks.”

The guy is still smiling down at him, looking like he’s trying not to laugh at just how flustered George has become, and nope, that’s it, George turns to the espresso machine, he can’t do this anymore.

“Bad, please, can you take the register for a sec?”

“George, I’m in the middle of...”

“*Please*, Bad, I am begging you.”

Bad pauses and narrows his eyes suspiciously. “Fine. There’s two cappuccinos, a triple shot americano, and a caramel and a vanilla latte to finish up here.”

“Cool, thanks, you’re great, he ordered a large double shot latte,” George says, desperately trying to remember Bad’s list, and all but shoving Bad towards the register.

It turns out this is worse though, because he can *feel* the guy (his name is Clay, his brain adds) looking at him. Or at least it feels like he can feel it. It’s probably paranoia. George turns around.

And makes direct eye contact with the guy, who gives him the kind of soft little smile that suggests he’s used to people absolutely dribbling out their own brains around him, and that does not make George’s blush go down.

“Fuck,” George mutters, spinning back to the machine and wondering if he can pass the completed drinks to Sap without actually having to turn around again.

Answering Bad’s calls for each new order manages to hold most of George’s attention, keeping him mostly distracted both from the feeling of still being watched and from the urge to peek over his shoulder again to check if he actually *is*. Unfortunately, it’s still busy, so it takes a while before he hears Sapnap call out “Double shot latte for, Clay?” (at least Sap is used to his awful writing), and George feels that it’s safe to risk a glance over - one last look, with the hope that Clay will be paying attention to picking up his drink.

Except George watches Clay give Sapnap a perfectly polite little smile, and then *immediately* look straight back at George *again*. George blinks, any hope of subtlety a distant daydream, and Clay’s smile turns back to the same, almost smug one from before, from when he was watching George work the espresso machine. Then he tips his drink to George like a toast, and finally, *finally* turns to leave.

Once he’s gone, George takes a moment to pull himself together. And then lets himself just die inside, because Jesus Christ he has never been that pathetic in his entire twenty-four year life. He puts his hands over his face and groans. If he’s lucky, the guy (Clay, *Clay*, repeats his brain) isn’t actually a student here, and he’ll never be back to the shop again. Because George isn’t sure he’d survive another visit.

When he uncovers his eyes, Bad is watching him.

“Oh so *that's* what that was about,” Bad says.

“What what was about?” George asks, fooling absolutely no-one.

“George, we are a coffee shop. We are here to sate thirst, not indulge in it. That's what Grindr's for.”

George splutters, “I don't, *Grindr??*” voice turning into a squeak.

Bad just half pats, half slaps him on the shoulder, and ushers him back to the counter. “Back to work you go, slave driver that I am. You can do the register now he's gone.”

“I hate you,” George mutters half-heartedly.

“No you don't,” Bad sing-songs back to him.

Chapter 2

It's Friday morning, not long after opening, and the coffee shop is about as quiet as it ever gets. The only customers are the short-tempered, unfortunate few who have early Friday classes, slouching in and taking their caffeine hits to go, and a handful of early risers, who make the most of the quiet to set up with laptops and pastries at the scattered tables. It's probably George's favourite shift to work, even if he doesn't often get to - no-one does their pastries and muffins as well as Bad does, so he's usually the one to open the shop until George rolls up with Sapnap in time for the mid-morning rush. Today though it's George left wrangling great trays of baked goods, which fill the shop with their warm, welcoming aroma, mingling with the usual smell of the coffee, and making the shop feel even cosier than usual.

Three weeks have passed since Clay came by and reduced George to an incoherent mess, and George thinks (with relief) that that was the first and last he'll see of him. He's stopped near-panicking whenever he sees someone tall in the door anymore, and he's mostly given up replaying over and over again in his head his idiotic contributions to the short exchange that was their "conversation," simultaneously wishing that he'd said less and said far more (it's confusing, he's well aware of that).

Except George should have known better, because the next time he looks up from the register, guess who's just arriving, slouching through the door with his bag slung over one shoulder, and looking just as effortlessly attractive as last time, despite some clear sleep deprivation going on.

Right. This time, George is going to act like a normal human being, instead of a person-shaped bundle of blushing and stuttering.

"Good morning," George announces, fixing his most competent smile and using his best customer service voice.

All traces of Clay's obvious early-morning daze evaporate as he looks up and spots George, entirely replaced with the same devastating grin from his last visit.

"Well good morning," he says, sauntering up to the counter. "Fancy seeing you here."

"*Fancy seeing m-* I work here," George replies, almost disbelievingly, and he tugs at the logo on his apron for good measure.

"Yes, but I haven't seen you in weeks."

"I haven't seen *you* in weeks," George retorts.

"I'm here all the time!" Clay shoots back.

"Well not when *I* am," George says, unsure if the offence he's putting into his voice is feigned or real...

Clay leans against the glass of the pasty display (normally George would complain - there's a big ol' sticker right there saying '*Please don't lean on the glass*' after all, but he decides to pick his battles this morning) and raises a seemingly knowing eyebrow. "Why, you trying to keep track of me or something?" Clay smirks.

George splutters desperately, silently cursing his body for betraying him as he feels a blush turn him crimson, and Clay bursts out laughing. That is, for given definitions of *laughing* anyway; he

wheezes like there is something desperately wrong with his lungs, face entirely creased up into a grin.

"Shut *up*," George says, eloquent as ever. "You're just, noticeable. You're tall."

"Uh-huh," Dream keeps smirking as he recovers from his own brief inability to breathe, apparently enjoying George's squirming far too much. "Tall."

"You are! You're like, freakish," George pouts, and Clay starts wheezing again.

"Are you sure it's not just you being short?"

George almost gapes at the sheer audacity of this guy. "I'm perfectly average sized, thank you very much," he says, enunciating more clearly in his annoyance.

Clay's smirk turns absolutely wicked, and George is *done*. This is the stupidest situation he's ever been in, standing here sniping and bickering and *not flirting* with someone he's only ever spoken to once before, and who's a *customer*.

"Right, well, now you've worked out that I do in fact work in the coffee shop I am currently working in, and finished insulting my height..." George attempts to glare, but by god it's difficult, especially when Clay raises his hands and gives him an absolute butter-wouldn't-melt expression. "What do you want."

Clay looks him dead in the eye and waits a beat of overly-expectant silence.

"A coffee."

George groans, closing his eyes as he tries not to let it turn into a screech, which sets Clay off laughing again.

"You are the *worst*."

Clay gasps in mock affront. "You can't call me that, I'm a paying customer!"

"You haven't ordered yet!"

"I'm trying to," Clay teases back.

George wants to throttle him. It's honestly a little terrifying how familiar and *natural* this feels, now that George has summoned the ability to speak in whole sentences.

"If you don't hurry up, I'm going to pick for you."

Clay gasps. "You could surprise me!"

"It won't be a very interesting surprise." Clay just shrugs. "Fine, you're getting a double shot americano and liking it," George declares, and grabs a cup to scribble the order on the side, before starting to punch it into the register.

"You don't need my name?" Clay asks, sounding a little too innocent as he hands over the cash.

"I know your name," George says. Then stops. *Fuck*. He screws his face up almost involuntarily, before risking looking up.

Clay's smug grin has dialled up to almost triumphant.

"I mean, there's no-one else here, why would I even need it?" George backtracks, entirely unsuccessfully.

"Su-ure," says Clay, stuffing his wallet away and sloping over to the collection counter, where he practically lounges, watching as George, blush now even more visible up the back of his neck, turns his back and tries to concentrate on making his drink. At least it's a simple one, because what George actually wants to do right now is beat his head repeatedly into the espresso machine in front of him.

"There," George pronounces when it's done, putting the cup down on the counter with a touch too much force, and lifting his chin to look defiantly (*not up*) at Clay, daring him to say something.

It's almost a shame when he doesn't rise to it. "Why thank you," Clay says, standing up to his full height (*dammit*) and hitching his bag onto his shoulder. He takes a sip, and sighs dramatically.

"Perfect," he says, and starts walking backwards across the shop towards the door.

"You're ridiculous," George can't help but laugh.

"Whatever you say, George," Clay grins, and then he's gone through the door, leaving George stuttering for an embarrassingly long time before he realises that he's wearing a *goddamn nametag*.

Chapter 3

“Dude, just ask the guy out, because this is pathetic.”

George doesn't bother with a retort, because it's true, he *is* pathetic. Clay's been by several times a week, every week since that last visit, and whilst George has managed to somewhat get used to Clay's appearances, it's still far too easy to get drawn into the back and forth, the laughing and the teasing and the straight (ha) up insults, getting swept up into the need to give as good as he gets, and not be left blushing like a teenager and generally being a disaster every time they actually speak. He's had, mixed results there. If he's being generous to himself.

“Sap, some of us try to be professional,” he says, sounding offended. It's not a lie, he does *try*. He just doesn't tend to succeed.

"Me-ow!" calls Bad, apparently listening in from the other side of the room.

"Pff, whatever," Sap scoffs, not believing a word of it.

"Anyway, I don't even know if he's interested. Or even likes guys. *Or* girls! And you've seen what he looks like, there's no way he's single.”

Sapnap wants to throw himself off a building. Anyone who has had to be in the shop at the same time as both George and Clay would have to be certified comatose not to notice just how interested Clay is, and physically dead not to notice the same about George.

“Just, ask him?”

“What part of *trying to be professional* did you not get, you idiot? I can't just go, *Hi Clay, I know we have an entirely transactional relationship, but I was wondering...* What?!”

Sap has collapsed into laughter. “George, that makes it sound like you're a hooker...!”

“Sapnap! That's not what I... you're not helping!” he whines.

“If you ask him out and he says no, all he has to do is find a new place to get coffee.”

“If I ask him out and he says no I have to find a new job.”

“Oh my god George you're so *dramatic*.”

“No quitting!” Bad calls.

“I was hoping he'd like, just, really blatantly hit on me or something.” George shrugs as if it's both obvious and stupid. He doesn't add that it feels like if Clay *was* interested then he would definitely have *done* something about it by now, because there's no way he hasn't figured out quite how hard George is crushing. Everyone else has, after all.

“He can't just hit on you, George,” Sap replies, tone probably closer to the patronising end of patient. *Not anymore blatantly than he currently is doing, anyway*, he thinks to himself.

“Why not??”

“Dude! First rule of basic human decency to service workers,” Sap explains. “Don't hit on them when they're at work. They can't go anywhere to escape if they're not comfortable, so it's not cool.

And by they, I mean we.”

George groans. “I thought Americans were meant to be more direct about these things?!”

“Just ‘cause we’re not as emotionally constipated as your desperately pining British ass.”

“Language!” Bad calls.

“Wait, I can’t say ass?”

“*Language!*”

“For ffffff---,” Sap huffs, and drops to a mutter, “----fudge’s sake.”

“How am I meant to know then?” George whines, ignoring what could rapidly turn into squabbling between his colleagues.

Sap throws up his hands, fed up with everything. “I don’t know! Just put your number on his cup or something, see if he texts you.”

“*Sapnap!* Who even *does* that? I’m not doing that!”

“Don’t be a muffin-head,” Bad says, suddenly close enough to ruffle George’s hair, “We all know George won’t be putting his number on his dream-boy’s cup. *We* will,” and he skips a quick retreat as Sap breaks down into hysterics at George’s desperate indignant noises.

*

The nickname sticks.

It takes less than a day for his asshole colleagues to switch entirely to calling Clay variations on dream-boy, dreamboat, and dreamy. By the end of the week, they’ve shortened it just to dream. It takes on a capital letter in George’s head shortly after, and then he’s screwed, because it’s replaced Dream’s real name in his head almost entirely. And when he realises he has to make an effort to not use the nickname, he knows he’s completely fucked.

Chapter 4

Every time George thinks he's got used to Clay dropping in on him like this (who is he kidding, *Clay dropping into the coffee shop to get a drink*, because that's what people come to coffee shops for, you self-delusional moron), Clay throws him a curveball. A few weeks ago, he'd left a \$50 in the tip jar when George's back was turned, and he'd had to endure Sap and Bad referring to Clay as his sugar daddy for a distressingly long time. Last week, he'd called him Georgie, and George had given him such a *look* that it had taken Clay several solid minutes to recover from his hysterics.

Today though, today is the worst. Today, Clay has clearly only just finished either at the gym or at practice (and Christ, the guy's a quarterback, how much more out of George's league can he get?) and come straight to the coffee shop. In his gym wear. Which is firstly; significantly tighter than the usual baggy hoodie or tshirt and jeans get up George sees him in, and secondly; is still damp with sweat. Which should not be attractive. Except. Except it is. It really, *really* is.

He's got his kit bag slung over his shoulder like a jacket, like he's some jock of a sportswear model, and it makes the muscles in his arms stand out even more than the simple fact of his shirt being sleeveless does. His face is still slightly red, and his normally messy hair is darker where it clings to his forehead and curls at the nape of his neck, and George was never, ever going to be strong enough to block the immediate thought of when else he might look quite that sweaty and dishevelled. And how much he wants to be the one to make him look like that.

George clears his throat, internally berating himself for being so horrendously inappropriate. One thing is for sure - he won't be getting out of this interaction unscathed. It wouldn't be so bad if the shop wasn't so busy, but of course it's the middle of the lunch rush, because George's luck is forever garbage.

On the plus side, it gives him plenty of time to enjoy the view as the line creeps forward.

When Clay reaches the front of the line, George's mouth has honestly gone a little dry. But he looks Clay dead in the eyes and goes, "Ew, gross."

"I don't even have the energy to sass you right now," Clay replies, despite not looking tired in the slightest.

"Oh my god, it's a Christmas miracle."

"It's spring, George..."

"That's how much of a Christmas miracle it is. Or was, until you ruined it by sassing me anyway."

"Geeooorgeee, just let me have my caffeine."

George can't help but smile as he rolls his eyes. "Fine, I guess. What can I get you? Other than a towel..."

"The biggest coldbrew you do. *Please*," and Clay gives him huge, pleading eyes.

George makes a face like he's considering it, tapping his sharpie against his mouth.

"Geeooorgeee!"

George finds himself unable to hold in his awkward laugh at Clay's melodramatic reaction, aware

that there's still a line behind him and that they're holding it up.

"Just, don't pour it over your head or anything."

"*Pour it over my head??* George, it's a drink, you of all people should understand that drinks are for *drinking*, considering where you *work*."

"I don't know what goes on inside that weird brain of yours! You do stupid things, and it'll have loads of ice in it, and you look really hot."

"Oh really?" Clay shoots back, with such a knowing smirk that George's brain practically bluescreens, especially when it's paired with the visible shoulders and collarbones, which frankly should be *illegal*.

"Not like that!" he almost screeches, despite it being, well, *exactly* like that. "Oh my god. Just, pay for your darn drink and stop cluttering up my till."

"Your *till*," Clay mocks in his worst British accent.

"*Register*, whatever." George hastily scribbles on the largest to-go cup they have, and punches the buttons on the screen a little too hard as he puts the order through. "Extra large cold brew to go!" he calls over his shoulder, passing the cup to Bad before turning back to Clay. "There, now bugger off."

"Language!" calls Bad from the espresso machine. Then he stops. "Wait, *is* that a curse word?"

"Yes, it is," Clay grins, and Bad frowns disapprovingly at George.

"Why would you *tell* him? Just, go away," and George pointedly turns to the next customer, trying to ignore the huge, shit-eating grin Clay is currently sporting, as well as his own inevitable blush.

Clay moves off, chucking his bag properly over his shoulder and joining the gaggle of people at the collection counter. George barely has any attention left to spare, but whenever he gets a chance, he sneaks a glance over at Clay again. Almost every time, Clay is looking right back at him, and every time George finds himself ducking his head, as if trying to deny he was looking in the first place. It's almost a relief when he gets a customer with a laundry list of drinks for their study group, none of them standard, and for the first time since Clay arrived, his attention is focussed entirely on his job.

Eventually, Clay sees his drink arrive on the counter next to Sapnap, just waiting for a lid. Sapnap snaps one on at the same time as he picks it up to read it out, with an ease that speaks of too much practice.

"Extra large coldbrew for Dream?" he calls, looking around when no-one immediately pushes forward.

"I ordered an extra large coldbrew, but..." Clay says after a moment, frowning.

"Oh, yeah, duh, this is definitely yours then," Sapnap says, sticking his arm out with the oversized cup.

"You sure?" he asks, not saying out loud that they definitely all know his name here.

"No-one else gets called that around here, so yeah."

What.

Sapnap is still holding the drink out, so Clay takes it, carefully, as if he doesn't trust it.

"Thanks," he says automatically, and Sapnap just shrugs and picks up the next drink along, both apparently unbothered by the entire exchange, and too busy to notice Clay's reaction. Clay steps back, and looks at the cup. No, it definitely says *Dream*, and it's definitely George's recognisable scrawl.

Clay hovers, still frowning, almost swaying on the spot as he dithers between trying to get George's attention and leaving. But George is swamped, and Sapnap is too busy to interrupt either, so Clay has no-one to ask what the hell Sapnap meant by '*no-one else gets called that around here.*'

George glances up from the register for the briefest of moments, expecting to see Clay waiting and watching, as before. But instead Clay is looking down oddly at his drink, with a strange expression that George can't place.

When George gets a chance to look up again, Clay's gone. George frowns, looking around the shop, but he's nowhere to be seen.

"Sap, did you see where Clay went?" he calls, standing on tiptoes and still trying to spot him.

"Pretty sure he left. Why?"

"He didn't say goodbye," George says, still making a face.

"I dunno, maybe he had to get to class or something."

"Hm." George keeps frowning. Something doesn't feel right - if Clay had made time to stand in line before bothering to head home and shower then he would surely have made time to say goodbye, even if it was just to wait until he could catch George's eye and give him a wave before departing. It sounds so dumb when George puts it like that, but he always does.

"Talking of Clay though, since when did you start calling him Dream to his face?"

"What? I, don't?"

"You put it on his cup, dude."

George freezes. "I did what."

"Wait, did you not even *notice*?"

"I..." George is rooted to the spot, the rest of the line forgotten. His stomach drops, and he feels his hands and neck go suddenly cold as the adrenaline makes his body go haywire. Fuck. *Fuck*. He'd been so distracted, he must have written it on autopilot, not thinking at all, paying too much attention to how goddamn hot he'd looked and not enough to what he was actually meant to be *doing*, and oh shit, oh *shit*. Oh *shit*, that explained the weird expression, that explained the leaving without saying goodbye, oh god, he's ruined it, he's ruined it, he's ruined it...

"Dude, are you okay?" Sap asks, leaving the counter and coming over to the register. George is shaking, there's a ringing in his ears, and he thinks he might be sick. "No, you're not okay, fuck."

"I need to take a break," George stammers out, and *flees*, ignoring the sounds of Sapnap calling after him and Bad desperately telling Sapnap that he's sorry, but they can't leave when they're this

busy, sounding torn, promising that they'll go after George as soon as they can.

*

Bad finds George a few minutes later, crouching behind the office door, head resting on his knees, breathing far too fast and seemingly trying not to have a panic attack.

"Hey," Bad says soothingly, crouching down in front of George. "Hey, it's okay. Breathe with me, okay? Slow it down, in... and out... in... and out... that's it, that's better." Bad keeps his voice positive as George's breathing starts to shift from desperate, shaky gasps to something a little steadier. "There you go," he says, shifting to sit down on the floor. "I brought you some water."

George's breath hitches, and his hands tighten into fists in his hair, before his posture slumps. "I fucked it up, Bad," he says, finally lifting his head enough for Bad to see how puffy and red his eyes have become. Bad hands him a fistful of napkins, and George takes them gratefully, scrubbing roughly at his face with the entire bundle before taking the water. It seems to be more to give his hands something to do though, because he lets his head thump back against the office wall.

"I'm sure you haven't really," Bad reassures, but George laughs hollowly.

"No, I really think I have." He sniffs and screws his eyes shut. "Stupid *bloody* nickname."

Bad had overheard some of the exchange between Sap and George, but he's had his back to the room the whole morning, and neither the espresso machine nor the ice grinders are exactly quiet. "Did he not like it?" he asks.

"He just left. Didn't even say goodbye."

"Oh."

"Yeah."

Bad pauses for a moment. "I'm sure he'll come back. He really likes you, George."

George snorts disbelievingly. "Yeah. Right."

Bad doesn't know what else to say, so he pats George awkwardly on the knee and lets them lapse into silence. "Are you going to be okay?" he asks eventually.

George shrugs uncertainly. "I guess. Just, give me five, alright?"

"No problem, whatever you need. Do you want me to stay?"

George shakes his head. "No, I... I'll be right out," and he takes a sip of the water before Bad can ask him anything else.

Bad drags himself to his feet, and starts to head back into the main shop, but he stops at the door.

"George?" George looks up at him. "You know we really care about you, right?"

George smiles weakly. "Don't worry, I know."

"Good," Bad says firmly. "Don't forget it."

"I won't," George says, and Bad nods decisively at him, before leaving the office.

George heaves a deep and still-shaky breath, and sighs it out. Hopefully Clay will just, not come back for a while. Give him a chance to pretend this never happened. Or not come back at all. That's for the best. Probably.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

So I've been chatting in the comments a bit, but I figured it was time to put something at the top here... I'm a bit rusty at this - it's been a while since I've posted in an active fandom, whatever the account or site...

Anyway, I just wanted to say THANK YOU SO MUCH, to everyone, commenters and kudosers and readers alike, and that I appreciate every single one of you. I genuinely never expected either of my fics so far in this fandom to get anywhere near the amount of attention they have done, and I am blown away and so, so grateful. The concept of fandom is wild sometimes, and to know that so many people are enjoying this little thing I've created is just insane to me.

So, yeah. I love you all. And on with the fic, I guess!

George turns up to work the next day acting as if everything is fine. He smiles at customers and gets on with things as if nothing is different, even if the absolute silence from all three of them on the topic of Clay creates a void in their usual conversation that's almost tangible.

Clay himself wouldn't normally be back the very next day, so none of them have to be surprised when he hasn't turned up by the time they close, even if they were all hoping he would.

The next day could go either way, and George looks like he's bracing himself through his entire shift, only to deflate when it ticks round to time for him to clock out and there's been no sign of him.

By the end of the third day, George has been so subdued that at times, Bad and Sap have almost forgotten he's there, working the espresso machines, keeping his back to the room, and only speaking when he's spoken to.

Then it's been a week, and Bad would be delighted about how focussed on their work everyone is now, if it wasn't for the reason *why*. He and Sap do their best to keep George perked up, but they both know that really, the only thing that's going to help here is giving him time and space, and that they're just going to have to wait.

*

Sap looks up from closing the register drawer straight into the eyes of a very familiar customer, and yeah, he's straight, he's not *blind* - he'll admit he can see what George sees in the guy.

"What can I get you?" Sap asks, narrowing his eyes suspiciously. The coffee shop is bustling, Bad on the espresso machine that's hissing like an angry dragon, and George at the far end of the counter, finishing and handing out the non-stop stream of drinks to caffeine-deprived students, so now is unfortunately not the time to ask Clay what he's doing back here, or interrogate him on where he's been.

"Double shot americano please," he replies, apparently choosing to ignore Sapnap's expression.

“And what’s the name on that?” Sap asks, more out of reflex than anything else.

There’s a half second of pause before Sap gets an answer.

“Dream.”

Sap looks back up sharply, marker still hovering. Clay looks totally serious, even though he’s smiling politely. Non-threateningly, almost. Then he looks pointedly at a busily oblivious George, then back at Sap, then down at the cup, and back up at Sap.

“Dream it is then,” and Sap passes the cup to Bad, elbowing him sharply and giving him a *look* before Bad can complain about him being a jackass for no reason.

“*Oh*,” says Bad, looking over his shoulder to the register, where Clay gives him a cheesy but ever so slightly nervous-looking finger wiggle of a wave.

Clay pays, and Sap moves on seamlessly to the next customer, even if he does give Clay one hell of a side-eye first, because George is far too easy to mess with sometimes, and he may be a petulant brat at times, but he’s still their friend, and this, apparently, really means something to him.

The americano is made, and passed to George, who barely has time to look up between drinks, applying lids and calling names without chance to think between each one.

“Double shot americano for... Dream?”

George looks up, and *panics*, because for the first time since this mess started, he’s *right there*, *smirking* down at him.

“I mean, for Clay?” George corrects, completely unsure if switching to Dream’s real name here is making things better or worse.

“No, I’m pretty sure it says Dream there,” he says, still smirking. George is rooted to the spot, seemingly making no effort to actually give Dream his drink, so Dream reaches out and plucks it from George’s hand, before giving George a jaunty salute with the cup and almost bouncing out of the shop.

The moment he’s out the door George unfreezes.

“SAPNAP! WHAT THE FUCK??”

“*Lang-u-age!*” screeches Bad, sounding almost as panicked as George.

“Don’t look at me!” Sap retorts. “I asked him what he wanted on the cup and that’s what he said!”

“He *said* that?”

“That’s what I just *said*, you donkey.”

George groans, high pitched and dramatic and slightly hysterical. “Oh my god, I can never work here again. I’m leaving town. I’m changing my name. I’m going to be a hermit in the woods. I’m-”

“What have I said about quitting,” interrupts Bad. “We’re far too busy, and you, my little muffin, are irreplaceable to me.” Bad’s voice drops slightly softer, and he smiles encouragingly. “He’s back though, that’s gotta be something, yeah? So work now, freakout later, okay? Good. Now shoo!”

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Just a small update, as the next chapter is kicking my ass - there's literally one section which just won't fit together right, and it's probably the most important conversation of the whole fic, but as soon as that's done it'll be up!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Bad and Sapnap are losing their collective minds.

They'd thought that after the mild fiasco of The Nickname, George's subsequent freakout, and Dream's return to the shop, the two of them would have got their act together and done something about the near-stifling levels of unresolved sexual tension whenever they're in the shop together. But they haven't; instead it's gone back almost exactly to how it was before. The only difference is that Dream has taken the nickname entirely in his stride, gleefully ordering his drinks under it, and grinning like the cat who got the cream if George slips up and calls out for *Dream* instead of *Clay* when he's working the collection counter, looking unbearably smug despite (or perhaps because of) George's ongoing mortification. And it is *ridiculous*. George flat out refuses to do anything himself, still absolutely certain that if Dream was genuinely interested in something more than an over-the-counter flirtation then he would have already done something about it by now, *especially* after the whole nickname thing, and as the weeks pass he's only getting more convinced. That hasn't changed how he reacts when Dream's in the shop though, still lighting up whenever Dream arrives, almost playing up the way he gets offended by Dream's teasing, blushing and squirming and bitching as much as he laughs and teases back as they flirt over the register, calling him an idiot with so much fondness in his voice that it's damn near nauseating for anyone nearby. He's got Dream's favourite drinks memorised, along with some of his class and practice schedule. He can tell the difference between when Dream's been up late because of a deadline, or because of insomnia. And when Dream isn't looking, George can barely take his eyes off him.

What George is actually *seeing*, though, when he looks at Dream, must be completely different from what the rest of them see, because to anyone with eyes, functioning colour vision or no, Dream is just as smitten as George. It might not be obvious in the same way that George is, with the flushing scarlet and the awkward giggles, but that doesn't mean it's not still glaringly, indisputably, *infuriatingly* clear. If the frankly absurd frequency of his visits to the shop didn't give it away, then the constant attempts to get a reaction out of George, to aggravate him as often as to make him laugh, practically pulling pigtailed at times, really should. But the kicker is how much Sapnap and Bad wish they could show George the difference between Dream when George is in the shop, and Dream when he isn't - no George, and Dream will order under his real name, still perfectly polite, still warm and friendly, but taking less than half the time, and leaving the moment his drink is ready, without having elbowed his way to the front of the collection counter and then loitered there long past what would be reasonable for anyone else. *With* George in the shop, he's always looking for increasingly flimsy excuses to stick around, holding up the line at the register just to fit another terrible joke in, sometimes even bringing assignments to the shop to actually work on in case George is too busy to endure his constant pestering, just to stay in the same room. And just in case it couldn't get more sickening, whenever George's back is turned, Dream has the exact same soppy expression that George gets.

Bad is so close to just cornering Dream himself and telling him that if he doesn't ask George out soon then he's getting banned from the shop. Sapnap is reaching the point of frog marching them both to the supply closet, locking them in, and telling them they're in there until they've gotten laid, and whilst that plan had been vetoed by Bad, screaming that there isn't enough bleach in the world and that he'd have to burn said supply closet down, they're getting desperate enough that even *he's* starting to come around to the idea...

Chapter End Notes

So if you want to read what would have happened if Sapnap had followed through on his threat to lock them both in the closet, well you're in luck, because that's what the second fic in this series is, *All your freedom, caffeine*. Enjoy!

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay on this one folks, it turned out to be harder than expected to write myself out of the corner I'd written myself into... Plus Christmas has been chaotic!

Either way, belated Happy Holidays to everyone - hope you all had (or are still having!) a chill time, and I love you all <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Hey Dream, what's up? What'll it be today?”

George doesn't realise what he's done straight away, only that there's dead silence in reply.

Oh not *again*.

George slowly puts his hands over his face, concentrating really hard on ignoring the beginnings of delighted wheezing from Clay, and failing to fight down the inevitable flush. It's a losing battle, and George just groans, long and frustrated, eventually leaning down to put his elbows on the counter and try to hide himself in his own arms.

“Why can't I stop calling you that?” George despairs, mumbling into his hands.

“I don't know George.” George can hear the kid-at-Christmas grin in his voice, ecstatic that he's caught George out after so long.

“Well I'm glad one of us finds it funny, ha-ha, wonderful,” George half pouts, half scowls, standing back up.

“Aww, am I not allowed to enjoy the fact that you have a pet name for me?” Clay smirks, leaning against the counter as George's eyes widen and he starts to splutter.

“*Pet* name?!” he squeaks. “It is not a... Dre-Clay!”

“You nearly did it again!” Clay wheezes as he starts laughing again.

“Shut *up*!” George whines. “I didn't even give you the stupid name, why am I the one suffering for it?”

“Wait, you didn't?” Clay's laughter suddenly peters out, and he looks down at George, confused.

“No!” George answers prissily.

“Who did?”

“Those idiots I have the misfortune to work with, of course. Who else?”

“Oh,” says Clay, eloquently.

“And it just stuck, because my brain *hates* me.”

"I thought..." Clay never pays a huge amount of attention to placing his order these days anyway, but right now he seems to have completely forgotten about it. "Sorry, I didn't mean... I mean, I won't anymore, if you don't..."

"Wait, what?" George says, looking up at an uncharacteristically serious Clay. "What difference does it make if not from me?"

The expression Clay makes is disbelieving "George..."

"Yes that's my name."

Clay looks like he's searching for words, before visibly giving up.

"Never mind. Don't worry about it," he says, unconvincingly, and he smiles the least reassuring smile that George has ever seen on him.

George frowns. He's never seen Clay like this, not after the first time he used the dumb nickname by mistake, all those weeks ago, not even after low-marked assignments, lost matches, or all-nighters. He's never looked this uncertain around George before, and it's disconcerting and almost unnatural.

"It clearly does matter," George says, and folds his arms.

"George, I said don't worry about it."

"Too late, I'm already worrying."

Clay's mouth flattens into a thin line. "I just misread something, can we leave it?" he says, sounding simultaneously pained and suddenly short-tempered.

George narrows his eyes, and looks at Clay.

He looks... disappointed.

Why is he *disappointed*?

"Wait," says George, narrowing his eyes even further. "Did you *want* it to just be my name for you?"

Clay is far too confident, too full of swagger to ever stumble over a simple, honest denial, George knows this - unlike George, he's annoyingly difficult to fluster. And as far as he knows, Clay has never actually lied to him. So the silence, the lack of an immediate sass-back, speaks *volumes*.

Maybe, *maybe* it's not just George all hung up here, and George's brain goes through a full reboot, reevaluating every single one of their dumb interactions. Maybe Clay might actually be invested in this, *thing* of theirs. Maybe.

Then he spots the tiniest hint of a blush at the very tips of Clay's ears, and now he's *certain*.

Oh he's been an *idiot*.

"You do, don't you?" Georges says, almost incredulous. He watches the hint of pink get that tiny bit darker, so much harder to see on Clay's tanned skin than on his own pasty British self, and his grin dials up to levels of smug that previously he'd only ever associated with Clay's face, not his own. "Oh my *god*, you *do*, you actually do." George is smiling so much his face hurts, finding himself at last able to see what's been right in front of him all along. He feels dizzy with it,

lightheaded and bold, even if he's still fighting against his own refusal to believe any of this. "I thought you only used it to annoy me."

Clay shrugs non-committally. "I mean, you're easily annoyed." Some of Clay's smile is starting to come back, albeit smaller and more contained.

George snorts, and then grins again, this time coy and knowing. "So you want me to keep calling you Dream, then?" he asks.

"You can if you want," Clay says, trying to play it cool, and for the first time, George can see him failing at it.

"If *you* want," George says, refusing to back down.

Clay shrugs again. "Tell me where it came from, then I'll decide."

Whilst the anxiety will probably hit like a truck once Clay leaves, right now George simply doesn't care. "I freaked out whenever you came by, so they started winding me up by calling you dreamy, or my dream boy," he admits.

George can see all the uncertainty vanishing from Clay's face, and he *beams*. "That's because I am," Clay grins.

George huffs a relieved laugh and rolls his eyes, but he doesn't deny it. The knot of nerves from the admission is lessening at Clay's reaction, because there's no way even *he* could misinterpret that. "So that's a yes then."

Dream looks so childishly overjoyed, it's absurd. It makes George feel unstoppable. *Fuck it*, he thinks.

"So, now we've got that sorted," George says, as if it wasn't his obliviousness holding the whole thing up, "I was wondering, if you wanted to meet up sometime, outside of here?"

For a half second Dream stares. Then, "Oh thank *god*," he says, collapsing melodramatically onto the counter, voice rising almost to a yell. "Oh my *god*, at *last*. Yes, *please*, I would *love* to. I was losing my *mind*, I thought you'd *never*. Ask." Dream is gazing up with overacted desperation, and George can't stop laughing.

"Oh my god, if you wanted to go out with me that bad why didn't you just ask me yourself?"

Dream stares for a moment in disbelief. "You can't just ask someone out when they're at work!"

"Told you!" yells Sap from the office out back.

"Shut *up*, Sap, why are you even *listening*?! Oh my god."

Dream's cocky grin is back in full force, which is even more ridiculous when he's now kneeling on the floor in front of the register. "Yeah George, he told you. Someone in this place has some sense."

George glares down at Dream. "If you can shut up for one moment, I was going to say you should probably have my number, but now I'm not so sure..." George says, though being unable to keep the smile out of his voice ruins the threat rather.

Dream almost leaps to his feet, literally bouncing as he starts to fish his phone out from his pocket,

but George stops him.

“Not like that.”

“What do you mean *not like that*?”

“I’m not just *telling* you, not when we’ve got this whole thing going on,” he says, gesturing at the counter still between them.

“Oh my god, Ge-orge! Why are you doing this to me?!”

“If you’ve been waiting as long as you say you have, you can wait another minute,” George almost scolds.

Dream hasn’t technically ordered, but George can make an educated stab at what he’d want - it comes with the territory of their aforementioned *thing*. George ignores Dream’s continuing melodramatic whining noises, turning instead to make his coffee.

Or rather, to very neatly write his phone number on the cup, underneath Dream’s name, complete with a little note saying “call me!” and *then* make Dream’s coffee.

Dream bursts out laughing when George hands him the drink.

“George, you’re so lame.”

“You’re the one with a crush on your barista.”

“Pfft, says the person with a crush on a customer.”

George makes a face. “Not the point. The point is, call me sometime?”

“Definitely,” Dream says, heartfelt, and it makes George blush all over again.

“Hear from you soon then, I guess,” he says.

“Very soon,” Dream smirks.

“Great, now you can leave and I can actually get some work done.”

“I’m going, I’m going!” Dream says, raising his hands in surrender and starting to walk backwards away from the counter and towards the door.

“If you spill it and can’t read my number anymore, I’m not giving it to you again,” George calls.

Dream stops, exaggeratedly cradling the cup as he at last turns and lets himself through the door. George’s eyes are going to hurt from rolling them.

George watches until the door closes behind Dream. Then he screws his eyes shut and tries not to laugh hysterically, pressing his fist up against his mouth to stop the elated screeching from bubbling out. Oh my god he actually... they actually... this is *ridiculous*, how is he meant to get *anything* done today now?

And then his phone goes, vibrating silently in his pocket and making him jump. He digs it out, looking at the unknown number on the screen, about to cancel the call and put it back away. Except he looks up first.

Dream is stood at the window of the shop, drink in one hand, phone tucked into his shoulder, grinning at George.

George slaps his forehead dramatically and goes to shove it back in his pocket, but Dream is now waving at him, gesturing at him to pick up.

I'm still at work! George mouths. Not that he was currently doing anything, but not the point.

Dream shrugs at him, still grinning, mouthing *and?! in reply*. The phone keeps ringing.

George shakes his head in exasperation and answers.

“Too soon?” asks Dream, partially audible through the glass, giving his voice a slight echo.

“Are you kidding me?!”

“I’ll take it that means too soon.”

“I’m not even meant to use my phone at work.”

“How about if I come back inside?”

“Oh my god you’re ridiculous. How about, I have your number now, I’ll call you after work.”

“Promise?”

“Yes Dream, I promise.”

Dream genuinely cheers, and George has to move the phone away from his ear or risk hearing damage.

“I’m hanging up now,” George laughs.

“Noo, noooooo!”

George ends the call in the middle of another drawn out *noooooooo*, and watches as Dream makes the biggest puppy dog eyes that he’s ever seen through the window.

Go away! George mouths, making exaggerated shooing motions. Dream pouts, and begins to slowly shuffle away until he’s out of sight, and George lets his shoulders drop.

Then Dream leaps back into view, making George jump, blows him a kiss, and runs away, wheezing and whooping. On the one hand, at least it doesn’t look like Dream is going to suddenly start acting any different. On the other, that means George still wants to murder him.

Chapter End Notes

Also, I have recently discovered that apparently Dream doesn't even like coffee. How dare reality come along and interfere with my coffeeshop AU... xD

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year everyone! <3

Spending time with Dream outside the coffee shop is even easier than talking to him on the phone had turned out to be, and they'd fallen into that even more easily than they'd dropped into the teasing and flirting over the counter, despite being little more than strangers back then. They just *work*, as comfortable and simple as if they'd known each other for years, but with all the excitement of getting to know someone brand new.

They walk back from an evening of arcade games and pizza to Dream's building, still talking about nonsense, close enough together on the sidewalk that their arms bump. Dream is ridiculous, and absurdly competitive, and even more hilarious when they have time to chase each joke far beyond its logical end, and George's voice is hoarse from screaming and his face hurts from grinning non-stop and at everything.

"So this is me," Dream says, coming to a halt at the bottom of the steps up to the door.

"Cool," says George. "Thanks for, y'know, today was great. We could do it again sometime?" *Words, George. Use them like an adult.* He'd been doing so well up until now. "We could catch a movie or something?"

"Yeah, I'd be up for that."

They pause, awkward, not quite sure how to say goodbye outside of the shop. They're still standing on the sidewalk, too close to be casual, Dream looking down at George.

"You could come in for coffee, if you wanted?" Dream offers. "I mean, no pressure or anything. Just if you want."

George scoffs. "Dream, it's like eleven at night, it's far too late for coffee."

Dream looks at George almost incredulously. "That's, not entirely what I meant..."

George blinks. "Oh. *OH!*" and Dream howls with laughter.

"Oh my god, Dream, shut *up*." George punches him on the arm, but then there are arms around him, enveloping him, holding him gently against Dream's chest, and any further protests die in this throat. Instead he sneaks his arms around Dream's waist, and tucks his head right in close.

"You're cute when you're flustered, you know that?" Dream says, resting his chin on George's head.

"Hey! Are you saying I'm not normally?"

"I, no, you're definitely cute normally. Far too cute. Distractingly cute."

"Hmm," George replies skeptically, not really paying much attention to his actual words though,

because Dream is running his hand up and down his spine soothingly, and it shouldn't feel as good as it does.

"But then again, you're flustered a lot."

"Oi!" George exclaims, though it's muffled in Dream's hoodie.

"I'm sorry," Dream says, not sounding it at all. "How can I make it up to you?" There's just a touch of a grin in his voice, as he turns his head so the words are said right into George's hair.

"I'll think of something."

"How about... Hm. Do you trust me?"

"Um, I guess?"

George definitely does not shriek when Dream straight up picks him up, turns them around, and deposits him back down on the first step up to the building.

"DREAM!" George yells, arms still reflexively locked around Dream's neck. And then he realises that they're almost eye to eye now, and Dream has the biggest shit-eating grin on his face.

"See? I'm a genius."

"It's a step, Dream, such an engineering marvel," he says. It's not his best comeback by far, but in his defence, he's very distracted, eyes unable to stop flicking down to Dream's mouth, which is *right there, so close*.

"Situational awareness, George," and *wow*, ok, apparently literally *anything* sounds sexy in his voice, especially when it drops like that.

Dream's hand comes up to George's cheek, thumb running over his cheekbone, and George can't help his eyes from fluttering briefly shut as he tries not to press into Dream's hand like a cat.

When George's eyes open again, Dream's lips are parted and his pupils are huge.

"Fuck, *George*," Dream whispers, heartfelt, and it's George's turn to smirk.

Then they're kissing, and *distracted* doesn't begin to cover it for a good while, the world drowned out by the feel of Dream's lips, the warmth of Dream's body, the tightness of Dream's arms holding him close.

When they break apart their noses are still touching, and George has a hand buried in Dream's hair.

"Ok yeah, step, good idea, I'll give you that," George says breathlessly, still so close that the words are a warm puff against Dream's mouth.

Dream's smirk is *filthy*, and it does things to George's stomach. "Oh I have plenty more where that came from."

George pulls his head back to look straight at him. "Dream."

"Yes George."

"Then why are we still outside?"

Dream's smirk dials up even further, then he ducks down, sweeps George into his arms bridal style, and carries him into the building, George screeching with laughter and his arms clinging tight around Dream's neck.

Epilogue - six months later

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Has he said I love you yet?” asks Bad.

“No,” George says, defensively, and slams the register drawer with a little more force than necessary.

“Ohhh boy,” says Sap, taking a sideways step away from George.

“If they haven’t said I love you in six months then they’re not worth your time,” Bad proclaims.

“*Bad*, you can’t just *say* things like that about other people’s relationships,” says Sap.

“Fine. *In my opinion*, and my word is law, because I am your boss...”

“*Dictator*,” mutters Sap.

Bad carries on seamlessly even as he flaps a cloth at Sap, “...if they haven’t said that they love you in six months then they’re not worth your time.”

“Bad that doesn’t even make sense, because I haven’t said it either,” says George.

“You don’t count in this, you’re our friend,” says Bad, dismissively.

“Thanks, I think?”

Then Bad spins around, flailing his cloth accusingly. “Wait, wait waitwaitwait, *you* haven’t said you love him?”

“No!”

“George! It’s been six months!”

“I know exactly how long it’s been! It’s not that simple...”

“What exactly is complicated about it?”

“I dunno. It just is.”

“Ohhh that sounds like someone wanting him to say it first...”

Damn Bad for being irritatingly perceptive sometimes.

“I don’t want to be, clingy, alright? I don’t wanna say it and ruin things if he doesn’t... y’know. I don’t want to scare him off.”

“If you haven’t scared him off already I don’t think you will now,” Sap says, and George scowls at him.

“George if he’s worth anything, it won’t ruin anything, even if he doesn’t say it back right then,” Bad says, with far too much seriousness for this time in the morning. “Anyway, it only matters if you’re happy, and you guys seem *disgustingly* happy.”

“Yeah, it’s gross,” Sap adds helpfully.

“And secondly, there is *no way* he won’t say it back. Nuhuh.”

“It’s just, hard, alright?”

Sap snorts, but Bad is conveniently oblivious.

“Look, it’s not difficult. Watch. Hey Sap?”

“Yeah?”

“I love you.”

“Aww, I love you too man.”

“Bad, that’s not the same, you don’t actually love Sap.”

“Course I do.”

“Not like, *in* love.”

“You can love friends. You love me like a friend, right Sap?”

“Yup.”

“That’s my point, you don’t love him like I lov-...”

George almost snaps his mouth shut.

“See? Easy!” Bad encourages. “You’ll be fine, I know you will. All you’ve gotta do now is say it to *him*.”

“I love you George.”

There’s half a second of stunned silence, and then the three of them turn all at once, comically in sync. Dream is almost leaning on his elbows at the counter by the register, looking completely unperturbed by both the general conversation and his own announcement, which he made with such casual certainty that he might as well have been talking about the weather.

“Dream!” George squeaks, the embarrassment turning into ice-cold anxiety running up the back of his neck. “We’re not even *open* yet, what are you *doing* here?”

Dream shrugs. “I figured I had special privileges by now,” and he smiles at George so warmly that the anxiety doesn’t stand a chance.

“*George!*” hisses Bad. “*George! You can’t just leave him hanging like that!*”

“Oh no you don’t,” says Sap, taking Bad firmly by the shoulders and beginning to steer him out of the room, “we are leaving them to it.”

“He can’t just *not say it back*, Sap! *Sapnap!*!” Bad is now frantically gesturing, arms almost windmilling as he’s manhandled out of the way.

“So, er, Monday morning classes, that’s a double shot americano?” George says, trying not to meet Dream’s eyes.

“That’s the one,” Dream replies, and when George does look up from writing on the cup Dream is still smiling, still so warmly, still remarkably soft, and the way he’s leaning on the counter brings him almost down to George’s height. Despite Bad’s panic, he seems utterly unconcerned that George hasn’t even acknowledged what he said.

George smiles back, holding Dream’s gaze for a moment, and then he turns to the machine.

The coffee shop is empty apart from the two of them, Sap having dragged Bad into the office, the jazz on the speakers easing in and out of hearing in between the grunging and hissing of the espresso machine.

George turns back, and hands over the drink, and he’s smiling, slightly conspiratorially, slightly apprehensively. Dream looks at the cup, and grins, huffing out a surprisingly shy-sounding chuckle. In George’s familiar writing is scrawled *I love you too Dream <3*

“George you’re such a dork,” he says, but his eyes are fucking sparkling.

“Shut up Dream.”

“I still said it first.”

“Shut *up*, Dream.”

“You can say it out loud, there’s no-one here.”

“I’m still technically at work....”

“Please?”

“No!”

“What about on your break?”

“Still no.”

“How about at home tonight?”

“Yes, Dream, I will say it at home tonight,” George sighs dramatically. “Just not *here*.”

“Yeeesss!” and Dream actually throws his arms into the air.

George sighs and laughs at the same time, unable to fight his own smile. “You’re such an idiot.”

“But you love me,” and Dream’s grin is the smuggest thing George has ever seen.

“Yeah, I do.”

“I’m keeping this though. I’m gonna frame it.”

“*Frame* it? You weirdo. I’ve changed my mind, I take it back, I take it back!” and Dream starts wheezing with laughter, trying to hold his cup high above his head and out of George’s reach, as George darts around the counter and chases after him. “*DREAM!*”

And that, my friends, is that.

(If you're not a fan of overly gushy author's notes, bail here...)

Seriously, I still cannot believe the reception this has had. For me it's been absolutely unreal, and it's been such a joy to be hearing that so many people seem to have enjoyed this, that I've been able to contribute something to this insanely huge, vibrant, and talented fandom.

My writing inspiration is fickle, so I can't say for sure if there will ever be another fic from me in this fandom (seriously, this thing in particular came out of *nowhere*...) which makes it even more important that I say thank you now, so ***thank you*** from the absolute bottom of my heart to all the readers, kudosers, and commenters alike - I appreciate every single one of you more than I can put into words, I am so, so grateful, and I hope that I have been able to share at least a little bit of the joy I've got from writing this. I haven't enjoyed writing this much in so long, and I've *never* had the energy, emotional or literary, to bash out and complete a multi part fic like this, so it's a bit of a huge deal for me, and it's so cliché and lame sounding, but I'm definitely putting some of that down to everyone here.

So yeah, I love you all, you wonderful people <3

Take care, be kind, and over and out o7

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!